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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
2 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam No. 9
(As of 11:30 A.M. EST)

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1. The Communists are continuing to apply heavy pressure against a number of major population centers and their surrounding environs throughout the four corps areas of South Vietnam. The allied military position appears to be most critical in Hue, Kontum, Ban Me Thuot, Da Lat, and Ben Tre. There are indications that the Communists are planning renewed attacks in the Saigon area, although the situation at present remains relatively stable.

I Corps

2. Fighting continues in Hue as US and South Vietnamese troops press against Communist forces who continue to offer stiff resistance within the citadel and in scattered parts of the city. Quang Ngai remains quiet, however, a late report states that the massing of Communist troops that withdrew from their attack on 30 January poses a serious potential threat to the provincial capital.

II Corps

3. In the western highlands, the allied situation remains most critical at Ban Me Thuot and Kontum City, where regimental-sized North Vietnamese forces continue their occupation of major portions of both cities and surrounding environs. Civilian casualties continue to mount in both areas, largely because of allied air strikes against enemy units holed up in heavily populated sections. Enemy forces have also resumed battalion-sized or larger attacks against Pleiku City.

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4. In the coastal provinces of II Corps, North Vietnamese forces apparently continue to maintain a major presence in Da Lat and Phan Thiet, the capitals of Tuyen Duc and Binh Thuan provinces, respectively. No major fighting has been reported in Khanh Hoa Province, the scene of recent heavy enemy activity.

Saigon and III Corps

5. Viet Cong troops are attempting to move into positions within Saigon and on the outskirts of the city in preparation for renewed attacks, according to a number of late reports [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] An estimated 2,000 Communists were reported near the Saigon port area; another 200 were said to be preparing to attack a police precinct station and possibly the US radio transmitting station in Cholon.

6. To the north of Saigon in the III Corps area there were no new attacks on 2 February, however, there are indications that the capitals of Tay Ninh, Binh Long, and Phuoc Long provinces along the Cambodian border may be the next targets to come under attack. Some 4,000 refugees have been generated in the Bien Hoa city area, where fighting in recent days has resulted in heavy damage to civilian housing.

IV Corps

7. The Communists continue to apply pressure against several provincial capitals and key areas according to information as of 1800 Saigon time on 2 February. The most critical area appears to be Ben Tre where heavy fighting is taking place. The enemy controls most of the city. Sporadic sniper fire and fighting in the outskirts is reported in Can Tho, Moc Hoa, Soc Trang and My Tho. VC elements remain in the immediate vicinity of Can Tho, Camau, and Rac Gia and additional attacks are expected. There is no further information on the situation at Vinh Long.

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Status of Enemy Forces

8. Available evidence indicates that the Communists retain major combat elements in I and II Corps which have not been committed in their current offensive effort. The situation in III and IV Corps is less clear, but is probably substantially the same. In I and II Corps the remaining units are capable of launching additional strong attacks in certain areas and can also reinforce the current assaults.

9. Enemy strength along the Demilitarized Zone and in northern Quang Tri Province remains considerable--up to four divisions. There are indications that two battalions participated in attacks on Quang Tri City and major elements of the 6th North Vietnamese Regiment were involved in heavy fighting at Hue. It appears that two North Vietnamese regiments and several independent and local force battalions are still available in the northern coastal provinces.

10. In the Quang Nam and Quang Tin Province regions, elements of the 2nd North Vietnamese Division have been joined by local force units in attacks at Da Nang, Hoi An and Tam Ky and scattered actions in the countryside. At least two regiments and probably as many battalions remain uncommitted in this area.

11. The picture in Quang Ngai is not clear. However, it appears the enemy has used at least elements from many of his seven battalions here at this juncture.

12. In coastal II Corps, the situation is uneven. Most of the 3rd North Vietnamese Division and several local force battalions are still available for action. Further south, about one-half of the 5th North Vietnamese Division has been identified at Tuy Hoa and Nha Trang, while the majority of enemy local force strength here has been committed.

13. Despite heavy fighting at Kontum and Pleiku, only a small percentage of the B-3 Front combat power has participated. Up to five regiments and a few more separate battalions remain uncommitted and available in the western central highlands.

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3.5(c)Political Developments

14. Vietnamese Communist propaganda on the Tet offensive in employing a strong anti-American theme in an effort to rally popular support for Communist objectives. Broadcasts by both Hanoi and the Liberation Front have characterized the current offensive as primarily directed toward ridding the country of the US "imperialists" and their Saigon "lackeys." The program of the Liberation Front is singled out as the guide to achieving these objectives.

15. A Front broadcast on 1 February pitched the anti-American appeal directly to South Vietnamese armed forces and police personnel. After painting a black picture of American involvement in South Vietnam, it told these people that their "golden chance" to contribute to the salvation of their country had come and urgently called on them to "resist the Americans." The broadcast reminded them that the program of the Front contains provisions for rewarding those who join the Communist cause as well as those who cooperate in the anti-American struggle, even if they do not join the Communists now. The broadcast stressed the need for immediate action, saying that the "situation is urgent and time does not wait."

16. The theme that the offensive represents a groundswell of popular sentiment favoring an anti-American struggle was also underscored in a 2 February article in the Hanoi party daily Nhan Dan. The article claimed that the offensive showed the strength of the revolution and of the "national union" resisting the US "aggressors", all of which it said is in line with the Front's program. Front statements discussing the formation of new popular front "alliances" in Hue and Saigon have stressed that their first objective is to oppose the US, bring about the withdrawal of US troops, and to negotiate with the Liberation Front.

17. The attempt to characterize the Communist military offensive as a broad, patriotic uprising against the US and Saigon regime was carried further in special Viet Cong and Liberation Front statements on 1 February.

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18. The Viet Cong issued a "special communique" describing the "insurrectional atmosphere of the masses," and claiming that the nationwide attacks were an "irrepressible uprising of tens of millions of people" bent on a common course of "national liberation." It said that although the recent fighting occurred for only a short time, it provided a basis for continued military successes throughout the country.

19. Nguyen Huu Tho, head of the National Liberation Front, wrapped himself in the same patriotic, anti-American robes in a special appeal carried by Hanoi radio on 2 February. Tho's appeal was addressed to South Vietnamese military and civilian personnel and called on them to join in a common struggle against the US and the Saigon regime. The Front's "only and highest goal", he said is the "save the country."

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